Was he ever in [Ruby's] bar?
HOOVER: There was a story that [Oswald] had been in the strip-tease joint that he had ... We've tied Oswald into this Cuban Fair Play Committee, which is financed, to some extent, by the Castro government.
LBJ: How many shots were fired? Three?
HOOVER: Three.
LBJ: Any of them fired at me?
HOOVER: No ... All three at the president ... He was hit by the first and third. The second shot hit the governor.

Hoover's report clashes with the later official version that one bullet missed, another pierced Kennedy's throat and struck Texas Gov. John Connally and a third fractured Kennedy's skull. Johnson and Hoover go on to speak as if the gunman were firing from in front, with Connally obscuring his view of JFK.

LBJ: Would the president've got hit with the second one ... if Connally hadn't been in his way?
HOOVER: Oh, yes, yes, the president would no doubt have been hit.

No date

Johnson suspects that Cuban leader Fidel Castro was a player in Kennedy's murder. But, as he says on the tapes, if Americans blame Castro or Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, the country could demand a retaliatory attack upon Cuba or the Soviet Union and "check us into a war that can kill 40 million Americans in an hour." In September 1964, Johnson's old patron, Sen. Richard Russell of Georgia, a reluctant member of the Warren Commission, complains to LBJ that he has been forced against his will to sign its report that one of the shots fired hit both Kennedy and Connally. LBJ concedes that he also privately doubts the official version that a single gunman acted alone.

Dishonest excerpting ↓

RUSSELL: I'm just worn out, fighting over that damned report ... They're trying to prove that the same bullet that hit Kennedy first was the one that hit Connally, went through him and through his hand, his bone, and into his leg ... Well, I don't believe it.
LBJ: I don't either.
RUSSELL: If a fellow was accurate enough to hit Kennedy right in the neck in one shot and knock his head off in the next one—and he's leaning up against his wife's head—and not even wound her, hy, he didn't miss completely with that d shot.

Perses meaning

CECIL STOUGHTON—THE WHITE HOUSE-UPI/CORBIS-BETTMANN

LBJ privately believed that a foreign conspiracy killed Kennedy

Johnson's suspicions that Castro was behind Kennedy's murder gain new force in February 1967. He tells his attorney general, Ramsey Clark, that he cannot believe what he has just been told about the Kennedy administration's assassination attempts against the Cuban leader.

Fiction ↓

LBJ: It's incredible! ... They have a man that was ... instructed by the CIA and the attorney general [Robert Kennedy] to assassinate Castro after the Bay of Pigs ... They had these pills and they were supposed to take 'em [if Castro] caught 'em. And they didn't get to take their pills. So he tortured 'em and they told him all about it ... So ... he called Oswald and a group in and told them ... "Go ... get the job done" ... It sounded just like your telling me that Lady Bird was taking dope.

A Chat With Jackie

A July 4, 1964, call from the LBJ Ranch to Jacqueline Kennedy at Hyannis Port.

LBJ: I've been out in a boat. I got a sunburn, and I'll ... be blistered now.
JK: You'll look marvelous with a sunburn.
LBJ: ... Lynda's with us. Luci's in Washington having dates.
JK: I noticed she didn't come. I thought it was something sinister like that.
LBJ: She said that she wanted a very special birthday present. She just wanted to go one whole day without a [Secret Service] agent. What do you reckon happened? ...
JK: [laughs] I'd hate to think! And don't *you*!

No dates

The Road to Vietnam

Vietnam looms over LBJ's presidency from the start. February 1964: Johnson complains to Miami publisher John Knight that withdrawing now could unleash a "Who lost China?"-style campaign of Republican vengeance that could cost him the 1964 election. Still he shows that he knows, even this early, that it will be very difficult to win a conventional war that far from American shores.

LBJ: Run and let the dominoes start falling over—and God Almighty, what they said about us leaving China would just be warming up ... I see [Richard] Nixon is raising hell about it today. [Arizona Sen. Barry] Goldwater too ...
KNIGHT: ... I hope we don't get involved in anything full-scale ... Long-range over there, the odds are certainly against us.
LBJ: ... Any time you got that many people against you that far from your home base, it's bad.

Johnson suggests to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara in March that perhaps they should try to educate Americans about what is at stake.

LBJ: Do you think it's a mistake to explain ... Vietnam, and what we're faced with?
McNAMARA: I do think it would be wise for you to say as little as possible ... The sign I see coming through the cables are disturbing ... Poor morale in Vietnamese forces ... A tremendous amount of coup planning.

May 27, 1964: As Johnson says on the tape the Joint Chiefs of Staff are pounding him "get in or get out" of Vietnam. He asks sell, the Senate Armed Services chair how important South Vietnam is to America's world position.

RUSSELL: It isn't important a damn bit, all these new missile systems.
LBJ: I guess it's important ... from the standpoint that ... if we don't pay any tention to this [SEATO] treaty [comm ting the U.S. to South Vietnam's defe don't guess they think we pay attenti any of them ... I don't think the peopl the country know much about Vietna and I think they care a hell of a lot le We tell Khrushchev, we send China